

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 19, The Social Gospel in America Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, American Christianity, Session 19, The Social Gospel in America, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Roger Green's lecture, "The Social Gospel in America," explores the historical context and theological underpinnings of this significant movement within American Christianity. The session begins with a remembrance of F.D. Maurice and then transitions to examining three strategies employed to preserve Protestant Christianity in America amidst rising liberal theology. **The lecture highlights two major intellectual battles shaping Christianity at the turn of the 20th century:** the response to Darwinism, particularly through the lens of Princeton theologian Charles Hodge, and the debate over biblical inerrancy, exemplified by figures like Hodge and Warfield against critics like Charles Briggs. **The session then introduces Walter Rauschenbusch**, a key figure in the Social Gospel, outlining his background, ministry in Hell's Kitchen, and the formation of the Brotherhood of the Kingdom to address social injustices alongside spiritual needs. **Finally, the lecture discusses Rauschenbusch's influential work, "Christianity and the Social Crisis,"** which traced the history of social concern from the Old Testament prophets to the present day, setting the stage for an examination of the theology of the Social Gospel in the subsequent part of the lecture.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Green, American Christianity, Session 19 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Church History → American Christianity).



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3. Briefing Document: Green, Session 19, The Social Gospel in America

Briefing Document: The Social Gospel in America

Source: Excerpts from "Green_AmerXy_EN_Sess19.pdf" by Dr. Roger Green

Date: October 26, 2024

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Roger Green in Session 19 of his lectures on American Christianity, focusing on the emergence and key aspects of the Social Gospel movement in America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Dr. Green contextualizes the movement within the broader intellectual and theological landscape of the time, highlighting the challenges facing Protestant Christianity and the responses they generated. He then delves into the life and early ministry of a key figure in the Social Gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch, outlining the foundational elements of his thought and work.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Context: Strategies for Saving Christianity in America:

- Dr. Green sets the stage by recalling three strategies developed by Protestant leaders to revitalize Christianity in America, which they perceived as weakening:
- **Deifying the historical process:** Viewing the Bible as a historical rather than a doctrinal text.
- **Stressing the ethical:** Prioritizing living a life modeled after Jesus over adherence to doctrine. As Dr. Green states, "Life, not doctrine. So, doctrine is kind of out, but how do you live your life, especially modeling it after Jesus? That's important."
- **Certainty of religious feeling:** Emphasizing personal experience of God over dogma, originating with Friedrich Schleiermacher. Dr. Green explains, "If we could just get people to experience some experience of God, then we've got the essence of Christianity."

2. The Impact of Darwinism and the Battle for the Bible:

- Dr. Green identifies two key "battle lines" that shaped Christianity in the 20th century: the reaction to Darwinism and the debate over biblical authority.

- **Critique of Darwinism: Liberal/Deist Critique:** Deism, with its "natural theology" emphasizing a Creator God who designed a beautiful world ("God is the clockmaker God"), opposed the idea of evolution by natural selection from below.
- **Evangelical Critique:** Evangelicals relied on a "revealed theology," using the Bible and the seven-day creation account in Genesis to counter Darwinism.
- **Charles Hodge's Response:** Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary, a "bastion of orthodoxy," directly challenged Darwinism, arguing in his book "What is Darwinism?" that "Darwinism is atheism." Hodge's influential "Princeton Theology" defined Protestant orthodoxy in the 19th century.
- **Theistic Evolution:** While Hodge strongly opposed Darwinism, Dr. Green notes the existence of theologians who attempted a middle ground by proposing "theistic evolution," suggesting God created through evolutionary processes.
- **The Battle for the Bible: Origins in the Reformation:** The debate over biblical authority is traced back to the Reformation's principle of "sola scriptura" (scripture alone), a "battle cry against Roman Catholic understanding of developing doctrine from tradition and the Bible."
- **19th Century Attacks:** The Bible faced increasing scrutiny and denial of its authority from various groups, including deists and Unitarians.
- **Defense of Inerrancy:** Figures like Archibald Alexander Hodge (son of Charles Hodge) and Benjamin Warfield, both of Princeton Theological Seminary, championed the "inerrancy of the Bible," arguing that "The Bible is inerrant in what it teaches. It teaches without error."
- **The Briggs Case:** Charles A. Briggs, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, sparked controversy by suggesting the Bible contained minor, "typological errors" that did not affect doctrine. This led to a trial within the Presbyterian Church, his conviction, and ultimately, Union Seminary's secession from the Presbyterian denomination, becoming an independent seminary. Dr. Green highlights the significance of this event, noting that it opened up "major, major splits happening over the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible."
- **North vs. South Divide:** Dr. Green observes a general trend where "the Northern seminaries became liberal, and the Southern seminaries remain conservative over the issue of biblical inerrancy," attributing this potentially to the more heterogeneous society in the North.

3. Introduction to Walter Rauschenbusch and the Social Gospel:

- Dr. Green transitions to the Social Gospel movement, focusing on Walter Rauschenbusch, often considered its father.
- **Highlights of Rauschenbusch's Life:**
Rochester Roots: Born and educated in Rochester, New York, a region previously associated with religious revivalism ("the heart of the burnt-over district") and a significant economic center ("the first American boomtown").
- **German Background:** Raised in a German-speaking family and educated at the bilingual Rochester Theological Seminary (a Baptist institution where his father taught). His frequent trips to Germany exposed him to German theology, including the work of Schleiermacher, making him "very comfortable in two worlds" and influential in bridging theological perspectives.
- **Ministry in Hell's Kitchen:** In 1886, Rauschenbusch began his ministry at a German-speaking Baptist church in the impoverished neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen in New York City, where he served for 11 years. This experience profoundly impacted him, exposing him to "extreme poverty, the misery of people, the hard labor that people had to go through."
- **Evangelical Identity:** Despite his focus on social concerns, Rauschenbusch consistently identified as an evangelical and maintained friendships with figures like Dwight L. Moody, attending Moody's summer Bible conferences at Northfield.
- **Baptist Conviction:** He remained a Baptist due to his belief that Baptists and Methodists "were the groups that most best held on to primitive Christianity" and were better suited to a democratic society than hierarchical churches.
- **Brotherhood of the Kingdom:** Rauschenbusch formed this group with other Baptist pastors and sympathetic Christians to address "social concerns" in their community. While focused on social issues, they continued to believe in and preach the traditional gospel message of "spiritual life, sin, corruption, and the possibility of salvation, holiness, and eternal life." Their efforts focused on practical issues like "better housing" and "better playgrounds for children." The name itself, "Brotherhood of the Kingdom," underscores Rauschenbusch's "kingdom theology."
- **Move Back to Rochester:** In 1897, due to progressive hearing loss, Rauschenbusch returned to Rochester to teach at the seminary. This "tragedy" ironically amplified his influence as he dedicated himself to "immense amount of

writing, preaching, and teaching," becoming "the foremost molder of American Christian thought in his generation."

- **Influence on Public Policy:** In Rochester, Rauschenbusch became a respected theological voice on public policy, influencing social and economic change within the city, drawing parallels to Calvin's impact on Geneva.

4. Rauschenbusch's Works: "Christianity and the Social Crisis":

- Dr. Green highlights Rauschenbusch's significant written contributions, particularly his 1907 book, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," which provided a history of the Social Gospel movement.
- **Five Key Themes of the Book: Old Testament Prophets:** The history of social concern begins with the Old Testament prophets and their focus on justice for the poor, widows, and orphans.
- **Social Teachings of Jesus:** Jesus' ministry demonstrated a clear concern for the marginalized, the sick, and the poor.
- **Decline in Social Concern:** The church, throughout much of its history since Jesus, has experienced a "major decline in these kinds of concerns."
- **The Present Crisis:** In 1907, Rauschenbusch argued that "the church has turned a blind eye to the needs of the poor."
- **The Call to Action:** The book posed the central question: "what to do, what to do?" challenging Christians to address the social crisis.

Moving Forward: Dr. Green indicates that the next session will delve into "the theology of the social gospel," particularly a "critical theme" developed by Rauschenbusch, likely based on his 1917 work, "The Theology for the Social Gospel."

This briefing doc captures the foundational elements discussed in the provided excerpts, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of the Social Gospel movement and Walter Rauschenbusch's pivotal role within it.

4. Study Guide: Green, American Christianity, Session 19, The Social Gospel in America

Session 19 Study Guide: The Social Gospel in America

Key Concepts and Figures:

- **F.D. Maurice:** Understand his background and his perspective on the passion and death of Christ as entering into human suffering.
- **Three Strategies for Saving Christianity:** Be able to identify and explain the strategies of deifying the historical process, stressing the ethical, and the certainty of religious feeling.
- **Friedrich Schleiermacher:** Know his role in emphasizing religious feeling as the essence of Christianity.
- **Darwinism and its Critics:** Explain Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection and the critiques it faced from both liberal (deistic natural theology) and evangelical (revealed theology based on the Bible) perspectives.
- **Charles Hodge:** Identify his position on Darwinism and the significance of his book *What is Darwinism?* Understand his role at Princeton Theological Seminary and the concept of Princeton Theology.
- **The Battle for the Bible:** Understand the historical context starting with *sola scriptura* during the Reformation and the 19th-century challenges to biblical authority.
- **Inerrancy of the Bible:** Explain the doctrine of inerrancy as defended by figures like Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Warfield at Princeton Theological Seminary.
- **Charles A. Briggs and the Briggs Case:** Know his position on biblical errors, the controversy surrounding his teachings at Union Theological Seminary, his trial, and the subsequent split and independence of Union Seminary.
- **North vs. South Seminary Divide:** Understand the general trend of Northern seminaries becoming more liberal and Southern seminaries remaining more conservative on biblical inerrancy and potential cultural reasons for this divide.

- **Walter Rauschenbusch:** Understand his background, including his birth and upbringing in Rochester, New York, his German-speaking family and seminary background, and his familiarity with German theology.
- **Ministry in Hell's Kitchen:** Know the significance of his 11 years as a pastor in a German-speaking Baptist church in Hell's Kitchen, his observations of poverty and hardship, and the impact this had on him.
- **Evangelical Identity:** Understand that Rauschenbusch considered himself an evangelical throughout his life and his connections to figures like Dwight L. Moody and the Northfield conferences.
- **Denominational Affiliation:** Know that Rauschenbusch remained a Baptist due to his belief that Baptists and Methodists best represented "primitive Christianity."
- **Brotherhood of the Kingdom:** Understand the formation and purpose of this group, its focus on social concerns alongside spiritual ministry, and examples of their work (better housing and playgrounds).
- **Kingdom Theology:** Recognize the importance of "kingdom" in the name of the Brotherhood and its connection to Rauschenbusch's theological framework.
- **Return to Rochester and Influence:** Understand the reasons for his return to Rochester, his role at Rochester Theological Seminary, his prolific writing, teaching, and preaching, and his significant influence on American Christian thought.
- **Key Works of Rauschenbusch:** Be able to identify and briefly describe *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) and its main points regarding the history and current state of social concern within Christianity.

Short-Answer Quiz:

1. Who was F.D. Maurice, and what was his perspective on the meaning of Christ's passion and death?
2. Describe two of the three strategies that Protestant leaders in America developed to "save Christianity" in the face of perceived decline.
3. Explain why deists would critique Darwin's theory of evolution based on their understanding of creation.
4. What was Charles Hodge's main argument in his book *What is Darwinism?*, and why was his position significant in the 19th century?

5. Explain the Reformation-era concept of *sola scriptura* and how it relates to the 19th-century "battle for the Bible."
6. What was the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as defended by theologians at Princeton Theological Seminary?
7. Describe the controversy surrounding Charles A. Briggs at Union Theological Seminary and the outcome of the Briggs case.
8. What were Walter Rauschenbusch's initial observations and experiences during his ministry in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of New York City?
9. Explain the purpose and focus of the Brotherhood of the Kingdom that Walter Rauschenbusch formed during his time in New York City.
10. What was the main reason for Walter Rauschenbusch's return to Rochester, New York, and what became his primary activities and impact there?

Answer Key:

1. F.D. Maurice was an English theologian who, like Rauschenbusch later in America, was concerned with the poor. He believed that the passion and death of Jesus Christ were about Christ entering into the actual sufferings of humanity, rather than a violent effort at realization.
2. Two strategies were: (1) deifying the historical process, which meant viewing the Bible as a historical rather than a doctrinal book, and (2) stressing the ethical, prioritizing how one lived life (modeled after Jesus) over strict adherence to doctrine.
3. Deists believed in a "clockmaker" God who created the world from above with inherent design and beauty, according to natural theology. They would critique Darwin's evolution by natural selection as a theory of creation "from below" that contradicted this divinely ordained design.
4. Charles Hodge argued that Darwinism was essentially atheism, asserting that one could not be a consistent Christian and believe in Darwin's theory. His position was significant because Princeton Theological Seminary was a bastion of Protestant orthodoxy in America at the time.
5. *Sola scriptura* was the Reformation battle cry emphasizing "scriptures alone" as the primary source for theological development, in contrast to the Catholic

reliance on tradition and the Bible. In the 19th century, this principle was invoked by those defending the Bible's authority against emerging biblical criticism.

6. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy, as defended at Princeton, asserted that the Bible is without error in its teachings from Genesis to Revelation. While some defenders acknowledged potential textual mishaps, they maintained the doctrinal truthfulness of the entire scripture.
7. Charles Briggs, a Presbyterian teacher at Union Theological Seminary, believed there were minor, typological errors in the Bible that did not affect its doctrine. This view was considered to undermine biblical inerrancy, leading to his trial, conviction, and the eventual independence of Union Seminary from the Presbyterian church.
8. In Hell's Kitchen, Rauschenbusch encountered hardworking people living in extreme poverty and facing difficult living conditions. This experience made a deep and lasting impression on him, as he had not witnessed such hardship in his earlier life.
9. The Brotherhood of the Kingdom was a group formed by Rauschenbusch with other Baptist pastors and sympathetic Christians in his neighborhood. Their purpose was to address social concerns like poverty and injustice among the people they ministered to, alongside their spiritual work.
10. Rauschenbusch returned to Rochester primarily due to progressive hearing loss, which he felt hindered his ability to continue pastoral ministry. In Rochester, he became a professor at the Baptist seminary, where he wrote extensively, taught, and preached, becoming a highly influential figure in American Christian thought and advocating for social reform.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the intellectual and theological landscape of the 19th century in America for the emergence of the Social Gospel movement. Consider the impact of Darwinism and the "battle for the Bible" on this development.
2. Compare and contrast the critiques of Darwinism from the perspective of deistic natural theology and evangelical revealed theology. What were the underlying assumptions and concerns of each viewpoint?

3. Evaluate the contributions of Princeton Theological Seminary to the shaping of American Protestant orthodoxy in the 19th century. Discuss the role of figures like Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield in this process.
4. Discuss the formative experiences in Walter Rauschenbusch's life, such as his upbringing, theological training, and ministry in Hell's Kitchen, that contributed to the development of his Social Gospel theology.
5. Explain the core tenets of the Social Gospel movement as exemplified by the early work and thought of Walter Rauschenbusch. What were its primary concerns, and how did it seek to integrate Christian faith with social action?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Deism:** A religious and philosophical belief that posits a God who created the universe and then ceased to intervene in its affairs. Deists often emphasize reason and natural law over revealed religion.
- **Natural Theology:** A branch of theology that seeks to prove or understand God's existence and attributes through reason and observation of the natural world, independent of divine revelation.
- **Revealed Theology:** A branch of theology that relies on divine revelation, such as scripture or direct communication from God, as the primary source of religious knowledge.
- **Orthodoxy:** Generally refers to the accepted or traditional doctrines and practices of a particular religious tradition. In Protestantism, it often refers to adherence to core Reformation beliefs.
- **Inerrancy (of the Bible):** The belief that the Bible, in its original autographs, is completely free from error in all that it affirms, including historical, scientific, and doctrinal matters.
- **Biblical Criticism:** The scholarly study and analysis of the Bible, using various methods to understand its historical, literary, and theological contexts, which can sometimes lead to questions about its authorship, reliability, and interpretation.
- **Social Gospel:** A Protestant Christian intellectual movement and social reform movement prominent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that applied

Christian ethics to social problems, advocating for issues like poverty, inequality, and injustice.

- **Primitive Christianity:** A term used by Rauschenbusch to refer to the Christianity of the early church, particularly the first and second centuries, emphasizing its perceived simplicity, focus on community, and social concern.
- **Kingdom Theology:** A theological framework that emphasizes the concept of the "Kingdom of God" as central to Jesus' teachings and the Christian mission, often involving both spiritual and social transformation.

5. FAQs Green, American Christianity, Session 19, The Social Gospel in America, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Social Gospel in America

1. Who was F.D. Maurice and why is he mentioned at the beginning of the lecture? F.D.

Maurice was a 19th-century English theologian who, like Walter Rauschenbusch would later do in America, was deeply concerned with the plight of the poor. Raised Unitarian but later ordained in the Church of England, Maurice spent his life caring for the impoverished. Dr. Green mentions him on the anniversary of his death (April 1st, 1872) as a precursor to the Social Gospel movement in America, highlighting his belief that Christ's passion and death involved entering into the sufferings of humanity, a theme resonant with the Social Gospel's emphasis on alleviating social ills.

2. What were the three strategies developed in America to "save Christianity" during a period of perceived decline? Facing a sense that Protestant Christianity was weakening,

three main strategies emerged: * **Deifying the historical process:** This approach emphasized understanding the Bible as a historical book rather than a doctrinal one, suggesting the importance lay in its narrative and historical context. * **Stressing the ethical:** This strategy prioritized living a life modeled after Jesus, emphasizing ethical conduct and practical application of Christian principles over strict adherence to doctrine. * **The certainty of religious feeling:** This focused on personal experience of God and religious feeling as the essence of Christianity, downplaying the significance of dogma and doctrine. This movement was heavily influenced by the European theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher.

3. How did different theological perspectives (Deism and Evangelicalism) critique

Darwinism in 19th-century America? Darwin's theory of evolution, published in *Origin of Species* (1859), faced criticism from both liberal and evangelical wings of Christianity:

* **Deism and liberal Protestants** critiqued Darwinism from the perspective of "natural theology." Deists believed in a "clockmaker God" who created a designed and beautiful world "from above." They rejected the idea of evolution by natural selection ("from below") as inconsistent with a divinely created order. * **Evangelicals and conservative Protestants** opposed Darwinism based on "revealed theology," particularly the biblical account of creation in Genesis. They believed God directly revealed how the world was created in seven days, contradicting the evolutionary timeline and mechanism proposed by Darwin.

4. Who was Charles Hodge and what was his significant contribution to the debate surrounding Darwinism? Charles Hodge was a prominent and influential theologian who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary, considered a bastion of theological orthodoxy in 19th-century America. He authored the book *What is Darwinism?* in which he strongly challenged Darwin's theory of evolution. Hodge's central argument was that **Darwinism is atheism**, asserting that one could not simultaneously be a Christian and believe in Darwinian evolution. His work, stemming from the influential "Princeton Theology," significantly shaped the conservative Protestant response to Darwinism, although some theologians attempted to find a middle ground through theistic evolution.

5. What was the "battle for the Bible" in the 19th century and what were the key positions and figures involved? The "battle for the Bible" in the 19th century centered on the authority and reliability of scripture. While the Reformation had championed *sola scriptura* (scripture alone), the 19th century saw increasing challenges to biblical authority, influenced by Enlightenment rationalism and emerging biblical criticism. * **Defenders of biblical inerrancy**, like Archibald Alexander Hodge (Charles Hodge's son) and Benjamin Warfield, also of Princeton Theological Seminary, argued that the Bible was without error in its teachings. Some held to absolute inerrancy, while others allowed for minor textual discrepancies but affirmed doctrinal inerrancy. * **Critics who acknowledged errors**, such as Charles A. Briggs, a Presbyterian scholar at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, believed that while there might be minor, non-doctrinal errors in the Bible (e.g., typological), its core doctrines remained sound. This view led to the Briggs Trial within the Presbyterian Church, where he was found guilty of heresy, resulting in a split and Union Seminary becoming an independent institution. This conflict highlighted the growing divide between liberal and conservative theological perspectives on biblical authority.

6. Who was Walter Rauschenbusch and what were some key aspects of his early life and ministry that shaped his theological development? Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) is considered the father of the Social Gospel movement in America. Born in Rochester, New York, a region known for religious ferment, he received theological training at the German-speaking Rochester Theological Seminary, where his father was a professor. His German background and familiarity with German theology were significant influences. A pivotal point in his life was his eleven-year ministry (1886-1897) at a German-speaking Baptist church in the impoverished "Hell's Kitchen" neighborhood of New York City. Witnessing the extreme poverty and hardship of his parishioners had a profound and lasting impact, shifting his focus towards the social dimensions of the

Christian faith while still maintaining his evangelical identity and friendships with figures like Dwight L. Moody.

7. What was the Brotherhood of the Kingdom and what were some of its key concerns and activities? The Brotherhood of the Kingdom was a group formed by Walter Rauschenbusch, consisting of fellow Baptist pastors and other sympathetic Christians in his New York City neighborhood. Their primary focus was addressing social concerns stemming from the poverty and injustice they witnessed. Crucially, they did not abandon spiritual ministry but believed the Gospel had implications for social life, including care for the poor and advocating for justice. Two specific examples of their work included campaigning for better housing conditions and the creation of playgrounds for children, who otherwise had to play in dangerous streets. The name itself reflected Rauschenbusch's "kingdom theology," emphasizing the reign of God on earth and the responsibility of Christians to work towards its realization in social structures.

8. What were some of the key themes and arguments presented in Walter Rauschenbusch's influential book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)? In *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, Rauschenbusch provided a historical analysis of the Social Gospel and argued for its crucial importance. Key themes included: * **The Old Testament Prophets:** Rauschenbusch saw the Old Testament prophets as foundational figures who articulated a vision of a just society and expressed deep concern for the poor and marginalized. * **The Social Teachings of Jesus:** He emphasized Jesus' own concern for the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable as central to his ministry. * **The Decline of Social Concern in the Church:** Rauschenbusch argued that throughout much of church history, the focus on social justice had significantly declined. * **The Present Crisis:** He identified the contemporary crisis as the church's neglect of the needs of the poor and its failure to address systemic social injustices in the industrial era. * **"What to Do?":** The book posed a direct challenge to Christians to actively engage in addressing social problems and working towards a more just and equitable society, thus revitalizing the social dimension of the Christian faith.